

**MINUTES
CITY OF BLOOMINGTON
COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABILITY**

Tuesday, November 1, 2011

6:00 pm McCloskey Room, City Hall, 401 North Morton Street

Next Meeting: December 13, 2011

Roll Call:

Members present: Maggie Sullivan, Cynthia Schultz, Ted Mendoza

Regrets: Bill Brown, Melissa Clark, George Huntington, Janice Lilly, Caleb Steiner, Toby Strout, Dave Rollo, David Parkhurst, Amy Countryman, Amanda Figolah

Staff: Chris Bentley, Jacqui Bauer

Chair Maggie Sullivan called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm.

Announcements:

*USGBC will have a meeting to discuss a possible partnership with Habitat for Humanity on their new neighborhood development on Thursday, Kelly Room @ 11:30.

Approval of Minutes:

The October meeting's minutes will be approved at the December meeting since a quorum of commission members was not present.

Public Comment:

Darrell Boggess, affiliated with SIREN (Southern Indiana Renewable Energy Network) announced that he had put solar panels on his house. He mentioned that solar panels had dropped 40% in cost. His meter is already running backwards even on cloudy days like last week. The best location for solar panels is on south facing roofs at a 40 degree angle. A forum on renewable energy will be held at the public library, Nov 9th 7 pm. Free.

Report from the Chair:

Janice will resign as of the end of January, so contact Sue Wanzer if you know of anyone interested in applying to be a part of BCOS.

We had planned on having an Earth Day Brainstorm, but that will be postponed until next month so more members can participate.

Maggie asked how things were going with the Energy targets for the STAR report. Cynthia explained that they are working on Transportation and Housing sections currently. Andrew has been contacting multiple people to gather statistics to create charts for the website. He has found some good data on bus ridership, trail use, etc. The STAR committee meets every other Tuesday from noon to 1pm if anyone is interested in joining in the discussion.

Committee Report:

STAR Committee Report

Cynthia explained that the purpose of the STAR report is to keep the City Council informed on sustainability issues. The STAR report must be made to the City Council every year. The report elements are in the process of being put online so as to facilitate ongoing updates. This way, the report will become more of a fluid document so it will be easy to report. The committee works with the Environmental Commission as well. More now than ever, BCOS think topically rather than departmentally so if the Environmental Commission is better suited to exploring certain things BCOS encourages this.

No other committees were represented.

New Business:

Terry Usrey Presentation:

Terry's report was focused on solar power sources only. They hope to add geothermal, wood burning, and ethanol figures in the future.

Solar furnaces: One system existed in 1986, and then there were no known new systems until 2008. There are 7 known systems in place today with a 7,000-watt capacity. All of the current solar air heaters are for residential use except for 1 commercial unit. SIREN breaks up installation into four categories: Institutional (school), local government, commercial, and residential. No schools have solar air heating units currently. Growth: Averaging about a 70% growth rate/year.

Solar water heaters: 20 in operation today in three sectors: 11 residential, 8 commercial, and 1 institutional. These units all together have a 81,000 watt capacity. 2009 and 2011 were banner years for solar water heaters. Growth: Averaging about 460%. These percentage growth increases are encouraging but the total number of systems is still quite low.

Solar photovoltaic: Elinor Ostrom recently installed 30 panels on her roof. 56 systems are known to be online today, and were installed over the past six years. These 56 systems have a capacity of 133,319 watts. Most growth has been seen in the residential category. 2009 showed the first local government installation. Bloomington South and IMU also have systems in place. Growth averaging about 200%.

Bloomington's overall potential capacity for energy production from solar power is around 323,126 megawatts. A very small number compared to whole consumption (around 1%) but it is a meaningful part since it represents clean, renewable energy.

State of Renewable Energy in Community: There are a number of private companies now offering solar services: MPI Solar, Solar Systems, Stumpner Building System, EcoSource, NuSun Solar, Energy Solutions, and Whole Sun.

Jacqui indicated that there are also 102 geothermal systems operating in the community—this is based on data from just one installer so is a conservative estimate. There is currently a range of capacities from 900,000-5.2 million watt range.

Terry encouraged policy decisions that will facilitate renewable energy use. Other forms of energy production should be looked into as well.

A member of the community asked Terry if the renewable energy increase was tied to tax credits? Terry said they definitely are. Terry definitely considered this when he put up his own solar panels. He doubts there would be nearly as many systems online today without the help of tax credits.

Is there a way of offering tax credits at a local government level? Prices keeps dropping which means they'll start paying for themselves. Other states have offered solar tax credit programs. In Berkeley, for example, homeowners were allowed to finance solar systems through their property taxes. Cynthia mentioned that renewable energy increases value of neighborhoods and increases community health.

Darrell said that people think buying solar panels is expensive, but solar can be a better investment than money in the stock market in the current economy. A citizen mentioned that he had to choose between two tax credit programs. Capping the options made it difficult. Terry mentioned that maybe next year he could take advantage of the other tax credit. Geothermal tax credit is the same as solar: 30%.

Terry concluded by stating that it's everybody's responsibility to attack climate change. Residents working on homes, businesses working on it at their facilities, and government trying to make their facilities as efficient as possible will lead to the best possible outcome.

Maggie explained that BCOS has set goals and targets for energy consumption cuts, and have also set a goal to increase local renewable energy capacity by 20 percent. It's a difficult economic situation to promote alternative energy use in, but solar power is more feasible now since the prices are coming down and other energy sources are becoming more expensive. Tax credits are in place at least until 2016.

Andrew Rector mentioned that he is working on a class project to come up with incentives for solar power use. Specifically, the class is looking at education and financial incentives that can be implemented on the local level. Next month his class will outline their ideas. Maggie explained that the green building incentives included in Bloomington's Unified Development Ordinance are being revised now. Green building incentives give developers the opportunity to build more units or units of greater densities if they incorporate certain green building principles.

Terry said he would share the PowerPoint with Ted so it can go on the Green News Network website once Terry has had the chance to automate some of the PowerPoint.

Terry explained that SIREN asks all contractors to report new solar installations, but there may be some that are not being accounted for. Jacqui explained that that Bloomington has considered solar panels for some time, but unless they can get grants to fund them, it's cost prohibitive.

Report from the Sustainability Coordinator:

Jacqui showed slides describing the results of the City's first energy inventory for city operations. She postponed her full report until more BCOS members can be present, but noted that water and wastewater treatment are the largest energy consumers. In order to really address reductions in energy use, water and wastewater treatment need to be part of the conversation. Half of energy consumed at the treatment plant is used to pump the

water up the hill from the lake to the plant. Water conservation isn't at the front of people's minds because we have so much water available, but water conservation still matters greatly since we are limited by expensive and vulnerable infrastructure and since so much energy is required to transport and treat water.

For the vehicle fleet, it is hard to calculate miles per gallon (mpg) for departments because of inaccuracies in the data collected. Instead, Jacqui used gallons used per vehicle for comparison. Sanitation and police use the most fuel per vehicle.

We'll be doing another MLK Day Energy Team project where we'll be visiting citizens in their home and showing them how they could make their homes more energy efficient. If anyone is interested in volunteering or participating in any way let Jacqui know. We will also be doing the Beat the Meter Blitz again this year where energy consultants will go into greater depth on specific ways that citizens can cut energy consumption.

The Bloomington Growth Policy Plan is being revised and will be approved in a year or two. This plan hasn't been revised since 2002, so this is a great opportunity to project what we'd like future development to look like.

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 pm.